



165 Brick Store Landing Road
Smyrna, DE 19977
302-659-DEMA (3362) or 1-877-SAY DEMA
FAX 302-659-6853

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT: Rosanne Pack
(302) 659-2210
(302) 222-6573

Observe National Preparedness Month: *Review family plan and supplies before the next storm*

By all accounts, Delaware dodged a bullet when Hurricane Irene spared the state a hard hit last week. Still, an earthquake, tornado and hurricane in one week should be enough to get everyone's attention as we enter National Preparedness Month.

Although Delaware's storm damage is not of the magnitude some states suffered from Irene, emergency management officials encourage everyone to realize that we are not immune to natural hazards and other devastating events. Those who had roofs blown away, trees come down on houses and cars, and flood waters rise in their houses last week can testify to that.

As serious as storm damage is for some in our state, officials remind everyone that it might be much worse for many more people in future storms.

"We won't always be so lucky," said Jamie Turner, Director of Delaware Emergency Management Agency. "We greatly appreciate the cooperation the public exhibited in preparing for Hurricane Irene. Now, we hope Delaware's good fortune during this storm doesn't lead people to be complacent about the next one. Because we were spared to a degree this time doesn't mean we can't be slammed by the next storm."

The Director joins FEMA officials in asking citizens to make sure they have a current household emergency plan and to regularly restock emergency supplies. Even after the winds and rain of Irene passed, thousands of Delawareans were without power for a few hours up to a few days. Being spared wind and flooding damage does not mean a family won't be without lights and a

means of cooking and keeping food cold for a while. Having battery or crank operated lights and radios and tasty non-perishable food goes a long way to keeping people safe and secure, even without power.

In the event you have access to a portable generator, avoid carbon monoxide poisoning injury or death by ensuring that you have adequate ventilation when you are operating the unit outside of your home.

Even though the damage from Irene was less than predicted, the impact witnessed in other states causes state officials to remind us not to let our guard down. With a history of September and October being frequent storm months, Delaware Emergency Management Agency joins the national initiative in encouraging and teaching preparedness. The agency, including Delaware Citizen Corps, offers materials, presentations and instruction in household and community preparedness.

Free family emergency preparedness presentations are available statewide. DEMA trained presenters can be scheduled for presentations that feature step by step guidance in creating a family plan, an example of an emergency supply kit and preparedness materials. The presentations are appropriate for civic and educational organizations, church groups and neighborhood associations as well as for businesses. For information or to schedule a presentation, call 856-5815 in Sussex County, and 659-2210 for Kent or New Castle counties.

Citizen Corps also offers Community Emergency Response Team training and emergency preparedness classes. For information, call 659-2243 or visit www.delawarecitizencorps.org.

For preparedness information, visit the following websites: www.prepareDE.org, www.ready.gov, and www.listo.gov.

Have a plan. Make a kit. Be informed.

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Some basics to help you be Prepared!

A household emergency plan should include the following:

- Enough emergency supplies on hand to last for three to five days.
- Supplies should include non-perishable foods (that people like!), at least one gallon of water per day for each person and appropriate water for pets.
- In case of pending storms or other emergencies, residents should monitor messages from local emergency officials.
- Household emergency plans should include tips on how to decide whether to evacuate or stay in place.
- Instructions on turning off gas, electric and water if evacuating.
- Choose an evacuation destination **prior** to an emergency and rehearse packing out.
- Have an out-of-state contact for family members and friends to check in with. Notify your out-of-state contact if evacuating.
- Evacuate early and beat the traffic so you can follow familiar routes to your own destination.
- Keep at least a half tank of gas in your car.

Important items to have ready in case of an emergency include the following:

- Battery- or crank-powered radio (like a NOAA Weather Radio), flashlights, extra batteries
- Medicines
- A hand-operated can opener
- Plastic trash bags and smaller plastic storage bags for storing food, matches or other items
- Utility knife
- First aid supplies
- Extra cash
- Extra keys for house and car
- Important documents should be copied and stored in a waterproof bag or container. These may include medical records (for people and pets), contracts, property deeds, leases, banking records, credit card contacts, insurance records, passports and birth certificates.

When creating or reviewing your family emergency plan, make sure you also consider the potential needs of everyone. If you or anyone in your household has special needs, plan now for safely and adequately taking care of everyone.

Pets also require special handling. They may become agitated during the onset of a storm, so an appropriate number of pet carriers should be on hand for safe travel. If evacuation destinations to stay with friends or family are not available, pet owners should pre-identify pet friendly hotels or pet boarding facilities within a certain radius of where you may evacuate. Pet shelters are available for those who stay in public shelters, however, people and pets will be more comfortable in evacuation destinations of their own choosing.

More emergency preparedness information is also available at www.dema.delaware.gov, www.prepareDE.org, www.ready.gov and www.listo.gov.